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SUBJECT: BOSNIAN NATIONAL ELECTIONS: SILAJDZIC LOOKS TO BE
A WINNER

REF: A. SARAJEVO 2307

[1](#)B. SARAJEVO 2279

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Summary

[1](#)1. (U) Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina October 1 went to the polls to elect members of the three-member Presidency, and members of State and local legislatures. CEC preliminary tallies at midnight declared Haris Silajdzic (Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (SBiH)) winner of the Bosniak Presidency with 38.13 percent of the Bosniak vote, and Nebojsa Radmanovic (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD)) the winner of the Serb Presidency by a landslide 65.23 percent. At midnight, the race for the Croat Presidency was too close to call, with the two leading candidates Ivo Miro Jovic (Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)) and Zeljko Komsic (Social Democratic Party (SDP)) separated by 0.4 of a percentage point with a large portion of the vote left to count. Small numbers of voters across the country encountered problems resulting from a new voter registration system but misunderstandings seemed to have been managed well by poll workers. Final but unofficial results will be released at noon on October 2 (0600 Washington time). End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina proceeded smoothly and relatively uneventfully under a clear blue sky over the course of October 1. Polling was well organized and, according to preliminary Central Election Commission (CEC) figures, voter turnout was up, in absolute terms, from previous elections with an national turnout rate of 52.74 percent. Polling stations opened on schedule at 0700. The Embassy dispatched ten teams composed of emboffs and FSNs to monitor developments throughout the country.

Results

[1](#)3. (U) As expected, heavy turnout in the Republika Srpska (RS) cemented the front-runner position of Milorad Dodik and his SNSD on all electoral levels. The 65.25 percent of the Serb presidency vote declared for Serb Presidency candidate Neboja Radmanovic exceeded the expectations of even the most enthusiastic pre-election SNSD commentators. All indications suggest that the SNSD will fare similarly well in legislative elections.

[1](#)4. (U) Haris Silajdzic was declared the winner of the Bosniak Presidency at midnight. Although significant numbers of votes in areas such as Sarajevo and Tuzla had yet to be

counted, Silajdzic, 38.13 percent appeared unassailable with his closest competitor, incumbent SDA President Sulejman Tihic, achieving only 18.12 percent. Tallies for the Croat Presidency remain neck and neck with Komsic and Jovic separated by less than half a percentage point for most of the evening. Although significant percentages of the votes in SDP strongholds of Tuzla and Sarajevo cantons are yet to be officially tallied, the race remains too close to call at 0300 Washington time. The CEC has not yet released preliminary results for legislative elections. Anecdotal evidence suggests the SNSD will ride the presidential landslide to a strong showing in State Parliament and the RS National Assembly. SDP spokespersons have asserted that the party fared particularly well in legislative elections predicting party representation will double in State Parliament to six seats.

Turnout -----

15. (U) Voter turnout was high during the course of the morning and early afternoon but slowed as the day went on. Certain precincts in metropolitan Sarajevo were reporting ballot shortages due to high turnout. A preliminary trend early suggesting voting was particularly heavy in the RS, especially in the eastern part of the entity, was borne out by subsequent CEC figures. Early turnout figures in the Croat heartland of Western Herzegovina were noticeably lower in the morning, although they appeared to pull even with the national average over the course of the afternoon. The general impression of our teams was that youth voters were more active than in the past. CEC turnout rates released at midnight on October 1 indicated voter turnout rates were 56.06 percent in the Republika Srpska (RS), and 51.13 percent in the Federation, with an overall national turnout rate of 52.74 percent. Although the 2002 voter turnout rate was 55 percent, the subsequent registration of 400,000 new voters means the current figures represent an increase in voter

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participation in real terms.

Voter Registration Problems -----

16. (U) Across the country the new passive voter registration system caused widespread, but manageable, confusion. Under the new Citizen Identification Protection System (CIPS), individuals were automatically registered to vote where they applied for a new national identity card. Although the CEC website maintained a guide to polling stations, we heard many reports that the information was incorrect and directed voters, including at least one mission FSN, to the wrong polling places. While a referral mechanism set up at polling stations by the CEC and various NGOs seemed to work well, the confusion often resulted in voters having to travel some distance and visit several polling stations before being able to cast their ballots.

17. (U) This problem created an extra layer of controversy in Brcko District where voters may choose to vote in either the Federation or the RS and were automatically registered in the entity where they voted in the 2002 national elections. The Embassy team in Brcko encountered a number of confused and angry voters at the polls who did not understand why they were registered in a certain entity. For example, embaffs spoke with Semso Sakovic, Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (SBiH) candidate for State House of Representatives, at his polling station where he discovered he was registered to vote in the RS and therefore unable to vote for himself. The problem was compounded in rural areas.

Looking Ahead -----

18. (U) Results in the RS, while dramatic, were not

unexpected with many pre-election commentators predicting that the popularity of RS PM Milorad Dodik would carry his SNSD to a sweep of the polls. Although the race among Bosniak parties was very close over the campaign season, the win by Haris Silajdzic was also presaged by incumbent President Sulejman Tihic's sagging popularity throughout the fall. However, as reported reftels, the results of the race for the Croat Presidency could have major implications for coalition bulding and the role of the Croat people in the national political debate.

MCELHANEY